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New York

President:	Sir Emyr Jones Parry/Ms. Howe-Jones	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Baali
	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	Benin	Mr. Zinsou
	Brazil	Mr. Sardenberg
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	Denmark	Mr. Faaborg-Andersen
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Greece	Mrs. Papadopoulou
	Japan	Mr. Kitaoka
	Philippines	Mr. Mercado
	Romania	Mr. Motoc
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Manongi
	United States of America	Mr. Brencick

Agenda

The situation in Sierra Leone

Twenty-seventh report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (S/2005/777)

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05-65294 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Sierra Leone

Twenty-seventh report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (S/2005/777)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Sierra Leone, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I understand — and this is a bit unusual — that the representative of Sierra Leone has been delayed because of problems caused by the transit strike. I would be grateful if the secretariat could take him to his seat at the Council table when he arrives.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Daudi Mwakawago, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sierra Leone.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Mwakawago to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2005/777, which contains the twenty-seventh report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing from the Special Representative. I now give the floor to Mr. Mwakawago, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sierra Leone.

Mr. Mwakawago: Two years ago today, the Secretary-General, with the Council's endorsement, appointed me as his Special Representative for Sierra Leone. Today brings a close to the final chapter in a country's gradual rise from the ruins of a devastating, decade-long conflict and its remarkable turnaround that now leads towards a future filled with hope and the promise of a better life for its population. On behalf of my predecessors and on my own behalf, I would like to take this final and auspicious occasion to express my profound gratitude to the Council for its guidance and support over the past six years in directing the effort that succeeded in hauling Sierra Leone back from the brink of collapse. The Secretary-General's trust and confidence was absolutely invaluable, and I am extremely grateful for it.

When the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) was established in 1999, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1270 (1999), the odds were heavily stacked against its success, and very few people gave it any chance of achieving its objective. That perception was further strengthened by the early setbacks that the Mission suffered, which included the capture of some peacekeepers and blatant disregard for the ceasefire agreement by the Revolutionary United Front rebels. However, as we bid farewell to the people of Sierra Leone, there is on the horizon no serious threat to the internal security of the country. The only aberrations that we have observed are a few isolated and localized incidents of public disorder, which, hopefully, were effectively brought under control by the national police.

The establishment of a comprehensive security network, known as the Office of National Security, has, over the past few years, created a framework for coordination among the security agencies at the national level and right down to the local level. However, the country's security structure, including the Office of National Security and the provincial and district security committees, still require additional assistance in capacity-building. International support will continue to be critical to that process.

No major threats have been discerned in the area of external security, while the situation in neighbouring Liberia continues to stabilize. Nonetheless, border security patrols have continued in order to guard

against any unforeseen mishaps that might occur. Ongoing discussions regarding the settlement of the Yenga border issue with Guinea are expected to yield the desired resolution, which should eliminate a potential catalyst for future friction. UNAMSIL has invested substantial resources to ensure the success of that initiative. The simmering situation in Guinea will also need to be monitored closely to ensure readiness to mitigate the security and humanitarian consequences that could ensue.

The Council may be pleased to learn that the Secretary-General's initiative aimed at mobilizing support to strengthen the capacity of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces elicited positive responses from Switzerland, the United Kingdom, India and the Netherlands. For our part, we have supported the International Military Advisory and Training Team in providing training in limited areas of specialization; joined forces with the United Nations Development Programme in improving the welfare and living conditions of the armed forces; and donated properties and equipment that were left behind by UNAMSIL military units, as per the relevant General Assembly resolution.

That generosity notwithstanding, large funding gaps still exist with respect to meeting security sector running costs and the acquisition of transport assets, especially support services, communications equipment and the provision of adequate accommodation. The restructuring of the armed forces to reduce their troop strength has continued.

One of our most satisfying achievements has been the realization of the benchmark to strengthen the manpower capacity of the Sierra Leone police to reach its pre-war target level of 9,500 personnel, under the supervision of the United Nations police. Similarly, training has also been conducted to impart a diverse range of skills to serving police personnel. It is encouraging to note that the rivalry that had existed in the past between the Sierra Leone police and the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces has continued to dissipate.

UNAMSIL's troop withdrawal is on course and will be completed today, while the present 33 United Nations police details are to be scaled down to 10 by the end of December. A smaller team chosen from that group of officers will be temporarily retained in Freetown to facilitate a seamless transition to the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL).

On the civilian side, local staff have been deployed elsewhere, while others have been given their terminal packages and offered the opportunity to receive training to start self-help schemes and small businesses. The majority of the international civilian staff are in the process of being reassigned to other missions, while some are being absorbed by UNIOSIL.

The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has now assumed command of the Nigerian company military unit that is currently providing security protection at the premises of the Special Court, until 15 January 2006. UNMIL is already finalizing plans to provide permanent support to the military guard force at the Special Court.

Following the local government elections in 2004, after a 30-year hiatus, the Government has begun implementing the devolution of some public services to local councils. Generally, the process is on track; however, challenges remain pertaining to limited capacity and the paucity of resources.

I wish to bring to the attention of the Council the fact that, in the past two years, revenue collection from diamonds has increased dramatically as a result of reforms and the overhaul of the sector. Diamond exports increased from $10 million in 2000 to $130 million in 2004. By November 2005, $131 million worth of diamonds had already been exported. The remedies that are needed include: tightening security; reviewing the licensing system; combating illegal sales; tackling the issue of child labour; the equitable distribution of benefits from the mining of diamonds; and resolving the persistent boundary disputes among local communities.

The main political parties, the ruling Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) and the opposition All People's Congress (APC), have already begun gearing up for the elections in 2007 by appointing their respective candidates for the presidential poll. However, both camps are experiencing internal fissures that are likely to have an impact on the conduct of the elections. As the 2007 elections draw nearer, it is very likely that both inter- and intra-party rivalry will intensify. However, the mere fact that there is vibrant political interaction among Sierra Leoneans is a welcome change.

I should also indicate that organizational preparations for the 2007 elections, including the restructuring of the National Electoral Commission and the delimitation of constituencies, are ongoing. It is also encouraging that both Government and international support for the electoral process have been forthcoming. It is therefore my conviction that the holding of a free and credible poll in 2007 will constitute a key benchmark in the achievement of long-term stability in Sierra Leone. Meanwhile, the long-awaited formalization of the Political Parties Registration Commission has been completed. However, the preceding delays developed into a critical test of the Government's commitment to levelling the political playing field.

Against that background, UNAMSIL has initiated a series of programmes designed to promote inter-party dialogue as well as reconciliation and tolerance among the political parties. A different but related conflict-resolution task that UNAMSIL has taken up is the provision of assistance to the Government of Sierra Leone in resolving issues that have created tensions in communities, such as disputes over chiefdom boundaries.

With respect to access to justice, I wish to report that efforts are being made to ease the backlog in court trials and to support training and capacity-building for court personnel, and steps are being taken towards the rehabilitation of prisons. Further efforts, however, are required to address existing challenges in those areas. The Mission has also joined forces with other local and external stakeholders in efforts intended to strengthen the Anti-Corruption Commission, which has experienced structural and operational problems in the recent past.

At the subregional level, it is also encouraging to note that inter-Mission cooperation has improved. Indeed, the heads of Mission of UNAMSIL, UNMIL and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) have continued to share information and to coordinate their peace efforts through regular meetings. To achieve similar goals, United Nations country teams in the Mano River Basin and Côte d'Ivoire have drawn up a regional plan of action for cooperation among them.

The establishment of the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone owes a great deal of its success to the implementation of the preceding joint UNAMSIL-United Nations country team transition plan for 2005. That has facilitated the seamless transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding and enabled the follow-on mission to become operational by 1 January 2006. The appointment of Mr. Victor da Silva Angelo, the current Deputy Special Representative at UNAMSIL, as the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General for UNIOSIL has enhanced the handover process between the two operations.

Considerable progress has been achieved on the economic front in the past few years, but it needs to be consolidated. This will be particularly significant with regard to job creation and the tackling of poverty. Poverty remains the main threat to the stability of the country. With an unemployment rate of 70 per cent, especially among young people, the challenges to security are quite evident. Therefore, more local savings, private-sector development and foreign direct investment will be needed in order to offset the major decline in donor funding that is anticipated in the light of the competing demand for resources worldwide. The pledges made at the meeting of the Consultative Group in London represent the first step forward in implementing the country's social and economic programmes, which will serve as one of the pillars of UNIOSIL's peace-consolidation strategy.

In the area of human rights, I should stress that UNAMSIL leaves behind improved human rights conditions in terms of fundamental freedoms, especially in the area of civil and political rights. Preparations for the establishment of a national human rights commission are now at an advanced stage. Regrettably, progress in building a reformed and effective judiciary system has been slow, and improvements in prison conditions are outstanding as the Mission departs. This has retarded efforts for the effective delivery of justice.

The report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is now out and has been widely exhibited. UNAMSIL, assisted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva, worked very well in promoting the outreach campaign. To this end, the Mission encouraged civil society participation and local ownership of the national reconciliation process.

We have also endeavoured to ensure scrupulous adherence to and implementation of the zero tolerance

policy on sexual exploitation and abuse and the United Nations code of conduct. This has been complemented by extensive training for military and civilian personnel. As a consequence, there have been very few cases that the Mission was called upon to deal with. It is my hope that the existing mechanisms to prevent and investigate cases of sexual exploitation and abuse will continue under UNIOSIL.

It is a great source of satisfaction and pride for me, and all at UNAMSIL, that I am able to report that the Mission has completed most of the tasks this Council had assigned it. Prominent among these achievements are the disarming, demobilization and reintegration of over 72,000 combatants, the return of over half a million refugees and close to two million internally displaced persons, the restoration of Government authority throughout the country, the organization of national and local elections and the retraining and restructuring of the country's security apparatus.

Concrete support for this assertion was provided by a public opinion survey designed by Jean Krasno of Yale University in early 2005, which revealed that a huge number of Sierra Leoneans had a very positive perception of the work done by UNAMSIL since it commenced its operations. The success of UNAMSIL has demonstrated how through collaboration the international community can respond to the needs and demands of countries in conflict in a rapidly changing global environment.

I am convinced that the Mission has also provided a model for successful peacekeeping missions in the future. The various innovative approaches and strategies put into practice by the Mission, including the well-calibrated plan for troop withdrawal and the integrated mission concept, are workable undertakings to be emulated. The regional approach to peacekeeping, which has gained currency in the West African subregion, must be encouraged and sustained.

Sierra Leone is certainly on an immutable course towards peace and development. While UNAMSIL has done much, Sierra Leone is still fragile. Sustained stability will also depend on the ability of the Government to successfully carry through the security sector reform programme and reinforce good governance, in particular the reform of the judicial sector. Such efforts are beyond the capacity of Sierra Leone on its own. Continued donor support is required for the completion of critical reform programmes. Needless to say, the funds pledged at the Consultative Group meeting recently held in London should provide reasonable support to the Government in its effort to create an enabling environment for the consolidation of peace.

Last but not least, my final remarks are directed to all the military and civilian personnel in UNAMSIL at both the local and international levels. To the troops who formed the backbone of our operations, I salute you all and wish to pay a special tribute to those who lost their lives or were injured in the line of duty. I also wish to thank the troop-contributing Governments for making such a vital investment in the search for global peace and security. To all the civilian staff, I commend your efforts for enduring tough conditions, and sometimes hardships, and wish you well in future endeavours, wherever you go.

It would be remiss of me to end this report without mentioning the pioneering Special Representative of the Secretary-General for UNAMSIL, Ambassador Oluyemi Adeniji, currently the Foreign Minister of Nigeria. His diplomatic skills carried the day in presiding over a feeble peace process that included monitoring a shaky ceasefire. It laid the foundations for transition to democratic governance.

Whatever success was attained depended very much on the cooperation of the Government of Sierra Leone, the United Nations country team, the diplomatic corps — especially those representatives most involved in the efforts to resolve the crisis — the non-governmental organizations and, above all, the people of Sierra Leone. I thank them all. I would like to single out the indispensable role the United Kingdom has played and is playing in the success of UNAMSIL in particular and peace operations in Sierra Leone in general.

I also wish to thank all our partners in the local and international communities, without whom this Mission could have faltered or failed. As the owners of this process, the Security Council deserves due recognition, but then, as its servant, I may not be the appropriate source. However, I am convinced that the Council, as the servants of the people of the world, has already started to be showered with accolades on its success in Sierra Leone. We at UNAMSIL are convinced that we will bequeath to the people of the

world the legacy of a mission that has been a great success.

At a personal level, this has been a journey full of new and exciting experiences that have provided invaluable and fascinating insight into the intricacies of multilateral diplomacy. I will retain the fulfilling aspect of my tenure, which enabled me to meet and develop a mutually beneficial relationship with members of the Security Council in our professional or individual capacities.

Finally, I thank the Secretariat, under the very able leadership of the Secretary-General, for constant guidance and support.

The President: On our collective behalf, may I thank Mr. Mwakawago for his briefing, for a very positive report on the situation in Sierra Leone. And may I, on behalf of the Council, at this particular stage of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, thank him and his team for what they have actually been doing on the ground. In particular — let me be quite clear — those of us who visited Mr. Mwakawago in Freetown in June 2004 understand exactly what it was he was achieving on the ground.

Now, as was agreed in prior consultations, I propose, under rule 33, that we suspend this meeting.

As I hear no objections, the meeting is suspended.

The meeting was suspended at 11.30 a.m. and resumed at 11.40 a.m.

Mr. Motoc (Romania): Let me thank you, Sir, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Daudi Mwakawago, for his eloquent presentation a few minutes ago.

Of course, I wish to commend the United Nations mission teams in Sierra Leone for their dedication and resilience over the past six years in advancing the peace process.

I would have hesitated to speak after the historic decision taken by the Security Council on the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission, but what we have acknowledged with regard to the United Nations role and involvement in Sierra Leone is also, in our view, a historic moment as we note the successful completion of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and of the peacekeeping phase in that country.

Sierra Leone represented a major test case for the Security Council's approach to peacekeeping operations. The transformation of UNAMSIL from the vulnerable mission of 2000 into the robust operation that subsequently conducted disarmament and demobilization and facilitated the elections in 2002 was indeed remarkable. The strengthening of UNAMSIL — which, at a certain point, stood out as the largest active peacekeeping mission — demonstrated the ability of the United Nations to learn from past experience and even past mistakes. We are pleased to see that the Secretariat has already started extracting the best practices from that experience.

The change in the United Nations strategy was strongly upheld by the leadership exercised by the United Kingdom. We take the opportunity to recognize the important contribution played by your country, Sir, in steering the international efforts towards today's achievements.

After the challenges faced by the Mission in the crisis of 2000, Sierra Leone became the area in which the Security Council showed a new resolve to sustain a complex peace operation in Africa. We acknowledge the innovative spirit impressed upon the Mission — one of the first to reflect the concept of the integrated mission. The same creative approach has been taken in crafting UNAMSIL's exit strategy and in establishing the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) with a comprehensive peacebuilding mandate.

UNAMSIL has also been involved in the first significant exercise of concrete inter-mission cooperation, given the fact that the United Nations Mission in Liberia is supposed to ensure, starting next year, the protection of the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

This is a time to take a step back and look at the general picture. A great deal of effort and resources have been invested in the pacification and stabilization of the country. As we can see today, those have born fruit. The prospects for Sierra Leone seem promising. Significant progress has been achieved in restoring State authority throughout the country, rebuilding the security sector and promoting national cohesion and reconciliation.

Sierra Leone is now at peace, but many chronic problems are still to be addressed. They require a cohesive and long-term action plan involving national

actors, the United Nations and other relevant partners. It is in that context that UNIOSIL has been created with the main aim of supporting and coordinating such efforts.

The potential threats to national stability should be perceived no longer solely in security-related terms, but rather within socio-economic parameters. The main challenges in the post-building phase are related to issues such as job creation, improvement in the quality of public service delivery and fighting corruption.

Sierra Leone is still at the bottom of the *Human Development Index*. The economic recovery is slow and painful, despite the increase in diamond exports and agricultural output. Clearly, the assistance of the international community remains crucial to the success of the reconstruction process.

We share the concern of the Secretary-General about the decline in foreign aid following the completion of the peacekeeping phase. The mobilization of resources is also being complicated by competing priorities, given the United Nations pattern of making multiple requests for voluntary contributions to other operations.

Last but not least, the continued engagement of the international community in that country should be matched by a renewed commitment of the national political parties to the principles of reform and democratic governance. As 2007 is an electoral year, we caution about the need to avoid sterile political disputes with possible destabilizing effects. Human rights, the rule of law and an effective judiciary sector must remain top priorities in the new phase. We note with concern the stagnant situation with regard to the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission since the last report of the Secretary-General.

To conclude, I would like to thank the British delegation for preparing a draft presidential statement, which we can fully support.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): My delegation should like to begin, Madame, by thanking you for convening this public meeting to solemnly acknowledge the withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). I take this opportunity to pay a very well-deserved tribute to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Mwakawago, his predecessors and the UNAMSIL personnel now preparing to leave Sierra Leone with a sense of pride in a job well done. Our thoughts are with those who paid with their lives to help the people of Sierra Leone to put war behind them and to live in peace and security.

In his remarks introducing the Secretary-General's report, the Special Representative briefed us on the situation in the country on the eve of the departure of UNAMSIL. He analysed the Mission's exit strategy, its achievements and its shortcomings. He also spoke of the future and opportunities now open to that country.

Sierra Leone has undoubtedly made progress towards stability with the assistance of its partners and UNAMSIL. It has developed its own capacity to deal with internal crises. Its security services — primarily the police — are now able to deal with problems related to law and order, and have done so for some time without UNAMSIL's assistance. Considerable progress has also been made towards strengthening the authority of the State and towards economic recovery. Moreover, positive signs are emerging in the political and security climates in the subregion.

Despite all this, the country remains fragile and vulnerable on several fronts, and an urgent response is called for. Sierra Leone indeed remains vulnerable to structural problems. Owing to the weakness of the State and its institutions, the Government is not yet able to take complete responsibility for the essential and pressing needs of its people. Despite the performance of the economy, the country is still suffering from extreme poverty and a very high rate of unemployment, in particular among young people. That poses a threat to the country's fragile stability.

Inadequately equipped and lacking the resources to carry out restructuring, the Army is not yet in a position to take sole charge of providing external security for the country. Sierra Leone must improve its relations with its neighbours, and subregional cooperation must be intensified, in particular in the framework of the Mano River Union, in order to overcome national insufficiencies and provide essential, complementary efforts in the area of security and the fight against cross-border problems.

The role of the United Nations peace missions in the subregion is vital in that regard. The success of the peace process in Sierra Leone largely depends on the international community's capacity to provide adequate

assistance to the country during the peacebuilding phase. The international community's determination will be demonstrated through the implementation of a peacebuilding strategy that builds the country's long-term capacity for conflict prevention and that improves economic governance. The international community's determination will also be demonstrated through donor support for the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone, which is tasked with assisting the Government in implementing that strategy.

In that context, the 2007 elections constitute a test for the new State institutions, for the society of Sierra Leone and for the country's emerging democracy, as well as for the international community, which aspires to make its handling and settlement of the conflict in Sierra Leone a model of success and a textbook case that can be applied in other situations.

In that regard, it should be recognized that, although the tasks are still not completed, there are certainly lessons to be drawn from that experience that can enrich the body of best practices for the design and the management of peacekeeping operations. The concept of benchmarks has turned out to be highly useful for measuring and assessing the progress of strategies implemented, and the United Nations would benefit from implementing benchmarks more systematically.

In conclusion, I would like once more to convey to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, my friend Mr. Daudi Mwakawago, our sincere thanks for the work that he has accomplished at the head of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone, and we wish him every success in his future endeavours.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Daudi Mwakawago, for his briefing. We commend him and his team for the very positive results that the Council is acknowledging today. Upon the completion of the withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), Sierra Leone will enter a new phase in the path towards stabilization and sustainable peace. We concur with the report of the Secretary-General (S/2005/777) that remarkable achievements have been obtained by the people of Sierra Leone and by UNAMSIL. Peacekeeping is no longer necessary, while peacebuilding activities are increasing in intensity and variety. The international partners must be able to sustain their attention on the country, according to national priorities, thus helping sustainable peace to take root.

The decision to establish the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone was very appropriate, and it sets a positive precedent of timely action by the Council to sustain international attention through the post-conflict recovery phase. We expect the Peacebuilding Commission will soon be entrusted with that aspect, as it makes recommendations and promotes greater coordination among United Nations bodies, as well as between the United Nations and international financial institutions.

We welcome the appointment of Victor da Silva Angelo as the Executive Representative and Head of Mission for the Integrated Office. We are confident that he will work closely with local authorities towards the common objective of tackling unemployment, in particular youth unemployment, poverty and the many social and economic challenges still facing Sierra Leone. As stated in the report of the Secretary-General, it is critical that the population begins to feel tangible peace dividends. In that context, the remarkable growth experienced in diamond exports is a promising source of direct and indirect employment, having generated $109 million by the end of September.

While security sector reform and the rule of law both need sustained attention in Sierra Leone, Brazil is pleased that the human rights situation has shown improvement and that progress is being made on preparations for the 2007 presidential and parliamentary elections. We look forward to those additional milestones in the consolidation of peace.

With respect to the subregion, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, as well as Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, may present risks for Sierra Leone. We welcome the increased cooperation between the United Nations and entities in the subregion, as well as the consultations with the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union, which have resulted in a more focused approach to the difficulties facing various countries.

Lastly, I wish to reiterate what I said in yesterday's Council meeting (see PV.5332) as Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1132 (1997) concerning Sierra Leone. It is my delegation's understanding that, as UNAMSIL has fully

implemented its exit strategy in December, the Council should start reviewing the sanctions regime. Discussions that could raise concerns in Sierra Leone, in particular with respect to the sensitive work of the Special Court, have been avoided. But it will soon be time to update the sanctions' legal basis, after hearing the views of the national authorities.

Before I conclude, I wish once again to commend the work undertaken by UNAMSIL military and civilian personnel and commend the troop-contributing countries for their dedicated service to the cause of peace.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, the Chinese delegation would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Mwakawago, for his briefing. Today's briefing could be Mr. Mwakawago's last to the Council. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to him and his team for their important role in helping Sierra Leone achieve peace and stability.

The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) is about to leave the land of diamonds. Over the past six years, the Blue Helmets have worked with the Sierra Leone Government and the international community, so that Sierra Leone could emerge from its war and embark on the road of post-conflict reconstruction.

Today, in Sierra Leone, basic stability has been achieved, the national authority has been extended throughout the country, and economic recovery has made significant headway. Those encouraging achievements can be attributed to the efforts of UNAMSIL. The Mission also implemented numerous innovative approaches, including an exit strategy based on benchmarks, the concept of an integrated mission and a coordination mechanism for subregional peacekeeping forces. Those approaches will, no doubt, provide useful lessons for other peacekeeping operations.

As the Secretary-General points out in his latest report, many challenges lie ahead in the reconstruction of Sierra Leone. We urge the international community to continue to provide Sierra Leone with the assistance it needs to promote lasting peace and development. The United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone is soon to be established, and we hope that it will begin to function efficiently and according to schedule.

We are confident that through joint efforts by the Sierra Leone Government and the international community, Sierra Leone will have a bright future ahead of it.

Mr. Dolgov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): On 31 December, the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) will come to an end on a positive note. We are certain that its activities will have set a good example for other peacekeeping operations — and not only those in the West African region — in terms of creating the conditions necessary for the achievement of long-term stability and the development of democracy in countries that have endured many years of bloody conflict.

Over the past several years, the Government of Sierra Leone has achieved significant success in post-conflict recovery. A stable security situation has evolved, the restructured Sierra Leone armed forces and police have been operating with increasing effectiveness throughout the country, and control has been asserted over the diamond industry. An important criterion for assessing the Government's efforts will be the, we hope, successful conduct of the national elections to be held in 2007. Here, the United Nations must provide the necessary assistance.

Naturally, the long-term prosperity of the people of Sierra Leone will to a large extent depend on the Government's ability to meet complex social and economic challenges: building a new justice system, rooting out youth unemployment, creating new jobs, reintegrating former combatants into civilian life and dealing with overall complex socio-economic problems. The implementation of all such programmes will require additional support from the donor community, international financial institutions and development partners.

We agree with the Secretary-General that UNAMSIL was a pioneer in a number of important areas of United Nations peacekeeping. With UNAMSIL participation, coordination was established among United Nations presences in West Africa, including the United Nations Mission in Liberia and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, and we saw the implementation of the concept of a complex United Nations mission designed to consolidate the efforts of the organizations and specialized agencies of

the United Nations system and other international and humanitarian organizations.

Beginning on 1 January 2006, UNAMSIL will be handing over to the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL), whose establishment is another important precedent in peacebuilding. We will all help facilitate its productive work.

I wish in conclusion to associate myself with other members of the Council in expressing gratitude to all the present and former international civilian staff and military personnel of UNAMSIL, and to the successive Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, in particular Mr. Mwakawago, who is with us in the Chamber today. It was their selfless endeavours that made possible the successful completion of the Mission's mandate.

Mr. Faaborg-Andersen (Denmark): My thanks go to Mr. Daudi Ngelautwa Mwakawago for his briefing. Today is a real occasion for optimism. The departure of the peacekeeping force, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), is good news for the people of Sierra Leone and their international partners. It underscores how far the country has come since the early days of UNAMSIL: from teetering on the brink of complete State collapse to making solid progress towards a fully functioning State.

UNAMSIL itself has undergone a transformation from a peacekeeping to a peacebuilding operation. We thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representatives, in particular Mr. Mwakawago, as well as all the troop-contributing countries, which have helped make the Mission a success. We should like also to thank the United Kingdom, which came to the Mission's rescue at a particularly critical juncture. The importance of the British over-the-horizon security guarantee for the stabilization of Sierra Leone must not be underestimated.

UNAMSIL has created conditions for stability and has assisted the Government in its commendable efforts to tackle the consequences of war. A good part of UNAMSIL's accomplishment lies in the innovative methods employed. Extracting and disseminating lessons learned from UNAMSIL would be helpful for existing and future peace operations, including the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) next door. We are hopeful that the new United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone will provide an equally strong role model for the next peacebuilding phase and will succeed in providing the necessary support to the Government, together with the country's development partners.

Looking ahead, the most delicate phase will be from now until the elections in 2007; there remain a good number of unfinished aspects of the peace process. These challenges essentially relate back to the sources of the war, including the cynical manipulation by unscrupulous politicians of basic human needs: livelihood, security, fairness and respect. The key objective for the next peacebuilding phase must be to facilitate the development of Sierra Leone society in order to ensure that such basic needs can be met without resort to violence, and that self-serving spoilers are denied the space in which to operate.

A continued successful transition will depend also on the Government's commitment to good governance and the principle of zero tolerance for corruption and cronyism; on the implementation of the poverty reduction strategy paper, the rule of law and gender equality; and on the capacity of the security agencies to act in a professional and efficient manner. The massive youth unemployment is of particular concern. Young men without proper employment and with despair for the future are a recipe for instability and could far too easily be manipulated by political players.

Also in that regard, the Special Court for Sierra Leone provides an important reason for optimism. Here, justice is served against those who used to be untouchable. Establishing the rule of law in a society which has hardly known it before is important for reconciliation and is a key step towards confronting new attempts at destabilization.

Finally, Sierra Leone's prospects depend on those of its neighbours, as highlighted by the Secretary-General. It is vital to revive the Mano River Union, strengthen the Economic Community of West African States and harmonize the efforts of the United Nations agencies across borders. Robust development cannot be achieved in a vacuum, but entails viable cross-border collaboration and trade.

Let me conclude on a more general note. Despite the challenges still facing the country and its international partners, Sierra Leone is an example of what a concerted international community can do about State failure — and it can do a lot, as we have seen.

The cost of UNAMSIL, at one point the largest United Nations operation, has been considerable. But the cost of doing nothing would have been much higher. It would have been devastating not only for Sierra Leone but also for the region and beyond. If anything, the wars in Sierra Leone and neighbouring Liberia have shown that State failure is deadly and contagious. They have shown why the United Nations needs to continue its peacekeeping and peacebuilding effort, and to become even better at it.

Mr. Mercado (Philippines): My delegation thanks the British presidency for convening this meeting to discuss the successful transition process in Sierra Leone. We also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Daudi Ngelautwa Mwakawago, for his comprehensive briefing.

As the chapter of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) closes and the era of the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) opens, we cannot but commend the combined and coordinated efforts of the United Nations presence, the Government of Sierra Leone and their international partners over the past few years in achieving valuable progress towards building a sustainable peace.

Indeed, Sierra Leone can now be called a peacekeeping success story, and we should acknowledge the factors that contributed to that success. First would be the alignment of political will and resources; secondly, the speedy deployment of a robust and well-equipped Mission with a strong mandate; thirdly, agreement among warring factions; fourthly, the institution of civil affairs operations to win the hearts and minds of the population; and fifthly, the implementation of properly designed disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes.

The next step now is to translate peacekeeping success into peacebuilding accomplishments. In that regard, various challenges face Sierra Leone in its process of reconstruction: decline in foreign aid, good governance issues, social problems and external threats. This, however, can be overcome as long as the international community, the partners, the United Nations presence and regional organizations continue their engagement in Sierra Leone.

We believe that the first priority is to focus on the economic front. Efforts must be undertaken to help Sierra Leone make up for the expected decline in foreign inflows due to the phasing out of humanitarian and post-conflict recovery aid by developing and maximizing its revenue-generating sources, such as agriculture and mining.

Creating jobs and stimulating private investment and sustained economic growth should be a major concern. The Security Council can actually be of assistance here. The Council's sustained attention to Sierra Leone, as exemplified by today's meeting, encourages donors to continue to provide development assistance and pursue investment opportunities. Since peace and security are paramount considerations for investors, the Council's imprimatur can entice investors to bring in resources, for example to rebuild physical infrastructure, an important requirement for long-term economic development.

In the same vein, Council advocacy of transparency and accountability in governance builds institutional stability and will encourage sustained international donor support and, equally important, improve the business climate for investor confidence.

The newly established United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) is also expected to assist the Government in dealing with the challenges just mentioned. We believe that UNIOSIL's integrated structure, as provided for by resolution 1620 (2005), will positively contribute to the efforts at peace consolidation through enhancing economic governance and creating lasting national capacities for conflict prevention.

By coincidence, as we consider the situation in Sierra Leone today, the Council and the General Assembly have just adopted the resolution creating the Peacebuilding Commission. We believe that Sierra Leone would be the ideal first candidate for assistance from the Peacebuilding Commission because of the good foundation already laid and its great potential for success.

The realization of the promise of Sierra Leone will not be complete without regional efforts. Support from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Mano River Union will be crucial to maintaining external peace and security. Regional players would be wise to acknowledge the positive developments in Sierra Leone and Liberia and to work towards the common goal of achieving peace and security in the subregion.

Continued inter-Mission cooperation among United Nations missions and offices in West Africa — UNIOSIL, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) — also reinforces peace and security in the region.

In conclusion, my delegation hopes that the innovations introduced by Sierra Leone in the area of peacekeeping will be followed in other operations and that another example could be set by Sierra Leone, this time in the area of peacebuilding. It is incumbent upon us, as a member of the family of nations, to help Sierra Leone in its transition from relief to development.

Mr. Manongi (United Republic of Tanzania): It is with special regard that we welcome Ambassador Mwakawago to the Security Council and thank him for having presented the report of the Secretary-General. We are particularly pleased to receive the most recent report of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) given its significance, namely that it shows the progress that Sierra Leone and its people have made, with the help of the United Nations and the international community, especially that of your country, Mr. President — the United Kingdom.

It is obvious that UNAMSIL's initial setbacks brought into question the viability of United Nations peacekeeping efforts worldwide. The Secretary-General's most recent report is clear testimony that Sierra Leone is one of the United Nations success stories in peacekeeping operations. We note with satisfaction that the country is now peaceful and that the political situation has remained calm and stable since the last report, in September.

We are especially pleased to note that the overall security situation in the country remains stable and that the national security agencies have continued to operate satisfactorily since UNAMSIL transferred security responsibility to them last year.

We are glad that the drawdown of UNAMSIL in all categories is on schedule and that administrative preparations for the establishment of the United Nations I tegrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) are in the final stages.

It is true that the country is still faced with potential threats to its security and political stability, including unemployment among young people, corruption, weaknesses in the judicial system, and resource constraints. These are problems that Sierra Leone must now seek to confront with renewed dedication. Despite the fact that Sierra Leone still faces those challenges, it is important to appreciate how far it has come.

Socio-economic recovery remains one of the country's crucial prerequisites for its political and security stability. We are therefore pleased to note that the Government is continuing to implement measures to reassert its control over the country's natural resources. It is important that the international community continue to render its assistance to Sierra Leone so as to help the country face up to its future political, security and socio-economic challenges.

Finally, we join the Secretary-General in expressing our gratitude to Ambassador Mwakawago and to all the staff of UNAMSIL for the successes achieved by the Mission.

Mrs. Papadopoulou (Greece): At this important stage, when the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) is successfully completing its peacekeeping mandate, we would like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General and to his Special Representatives, as well as to the personnel of the Mission, who have spared no effort in promoting peace and stability in the country and have enabled the people of Sierra Leone to face the future with hope.

As UNAMSIL withdraws, we would like to commend the innovative methods and practices it has introduced over the past six years to ensure the best possible outcome for its operations. UNAMSIL brought together the efforts and resources of the United Nations family as well as of humanitarian organizations, in pursuit of a common goal.

Sierra Leone has already embarked on a serious effort towards economic and democratic reform. The progress made so far cannot be easily sustained unless considerable efforts are made by the Government to address the root causes of the problems that led to the civil war in the first place.

Emphasis should be placed on fighting corruption, improving the economy and the living standards of the population in general, dealing with unemployment and improving public services, continuing security sector Reform, and remedying the weaknesses that exist in the judiciary system and in the

administration of justice. With regard to the last point in particular, we would stress that civil unrest and a culture of impunity are major threats to the political stability and to the long-term prospects of the country. In that respect, we would like to express our appreciation for the work of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which aims at ending impunity, strengthening the rule of law and promoting national reconciliation.

Organizing peaceful and credible elections constitutes the next crucial step towards completing the process of peace consolidation and making Sierra Leone a true success story. The newly established United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) should work to ensure that the country will achieve sustainable development and will break out of the vicious circle of successive internal conflicts and economic crises.

Greece hopes that UNIOSIL will draft a strategy to support in an effective and coordinated manner the Government of Sierra Leone in enhancing its capacity to pursue policies aiming at social and economic development in order to address the remaining challenges and eliminate the possibility of future conflicts, in particular through a poverty reduction strategy.

I would like to reiterate our strong conviction that only through a close and coordinated partnership of all those involved, including civil society, will it be possible for the international community to reconcile immediate requirements with long-term goals and to rally all the resources required to capitalize on the efforts made so far and consolidate peace, stability, security and prosperity in the country. The international community should stand by Sierra Leone in this critical phase and provide all the necessary support in this regard, including through the Peacebuilding Commission, which has been established.

Mr. Brencick (United States of America): My delegation would also like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mwakawago for his final briefing to the Council and to express deep appreciation for his dedicated service. We also salute Force Commander Major-General Akram, Police Commissioner Benzu and all the civilian and military personnel of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), past and present, for their successful mission.

Finally, looking ahead, we congratulate Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General Victor da Silva Angelo on his well-deserved appointment as the new Executive Representative for the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL).

The successful end of any peacekeeping operation, especially one that, just a few years ago, was the largest peacekeeping operation in the world, is truly a momentous occasion. My Government is pleased to join others today in congratulating UNAMSIL on the completion of its long and exceedingly difficult mission. Despite the problems, the Sierra Leone of today is, thanks to UNAMSIL, an altogether different and far more hopeful place than it was during the war-torn decade of the 1990s. We salute all those who have participated in and supported UNAMSIL over the past six years for the many accomplishments that have taken place in that country since the Lomé Peace Agreement.

While the time for peacekeeping is over, the time for peacebuilding is at hand. It is highly appropriate today, as the Peacebuilding Commission has been created by the General Assembly and by this body, for us to have this discussion. With the establishment of UNIOSIL and with donations from many quarters around the world, the international community has underscored that it is, and will remain, part of this rebuilding process.

Myriad challenges remain, of course. These include the consolidation of democratic institutions, improvement of human rights practices and a transformation of the economy. Better governance, greater transparency and more inclusive policies by the Government will be especially critical for building on the current peace in Sierra Leone.

We look forward to working with the United Nations and with Sierra Leone to help it help itself during this important phase. We also agree with the Secretary-General, who has drawn attention to the wealth of lessons for future peacekeeping operations provided by UNAMSIL's experience. We welcome the focus on closer cooperation among regional peacekeeping operations, among other fresh approaches to peacekeeping. Innovation will be part of UNAMSIL's proud legacy, and in this regard we note the essential security support and other assistance

provided by UNAMSIL to the Special Court in Sierra Leone. We are very pleased that the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) will be continuing to provide the security the Court needs as it winds up its work.

Finally, we commend Special Representative Mwakawago and the entire United Nations team for UNAMSIL's very well-planned, well-balanced and well-executed drawdown and completion strategy. We thank them all for a job well done.

Mr. Kitaoka (Japan): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mwakawago for his briefing on the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL).

The Japanese delegation is particularly pleased to note that UNAMSIL is expected to successfully complete its mission very soon. We are also encouraged that there has been steady progress in Sierra Leone in the areas of security and general living conditions of the people. Thus, Sierra Leone now finds itself in transition from the decade-long conflict to finding peace, however fragile. The successor arrangement, the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL), is now proposed to replace UNAMSIL in order to consolidate this fledgling peace. In this connection, we welcome the appointment of Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General da Silva Angelo as the Executive Representative for UNIOSIL.

Despite some difficulties at the beginning of its deployment and some delays in its scheduled withdrawal, UNAMSIL has proved to be a successful peacekeeping operation. It is worthwhile to analyse factors that contributed to the success of the Mission. From our own perspective, we would like to point out the following four factors as important.

First, we should like to note the high quality of leadership provided at the top of the Mission, first by Mr. Adeniji, the former Special Representative of the Secretary-General at UNAMSIL and current Foreign Minister of Nigeria, and then by Mr. Mwakawago, the current Special Representative. They have shown both decisiveness and quality leadership in steering the Mission through some of its difficult phases and have worked in close consultation with Headquarters in New York. For their leadership, they deserve the Council's full commendation and gratitude.

Secondly, we note that efforts to restore peace have been made in a manner that respects to the fullest the ownership of the host country, Sierra Leone. The designation of specific benchmarks to provide direction and to measure future progress has also proved particularly useful.

Thirdly, UNAMSIL worked in close collaboration with other international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the donor community on the ground. For example, UNAMSIL's security-related work on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and on capacity-building for the local security authorities was carried out in a manner that complements and supports peacebuilding projects implemented by the donors, international organizations and NGOs. As a donor participant, Japan was part of such collaborative efforts in Sierra Leone and has been satisfied with the way the United Nations peace mission has taken care to ensure good teamwork among various actors involved in assisting in the consolidation of peace in Sierra Leone.

Last but not least, in addition to being equipped with the necessary resources, in particular the military personnel, UNAMSIL was successful because countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), particularly Nigeria and Ghana, had a positive involvement in the peace process of Sierra Leone.

UNIOSIL includes a United Nations country team, and its leader is expected to fulfil concurrently the roles of Resident Coordinator and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative. This type of mission composition could serve as a good model for the peacebuilding presence in a post-peacekeeping phase. Recently, my delegation, as the Chair of the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, hosted a workshop that focused on the transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding in Sierra Leone. In that workshop, we learned in some detail that the modalities of UNIOSIL's activities, as presented in the Secretary-General's report, had been elaborated through close consultations between Headquarters and the field mission. That method of work, no doubt, contributed to fostering an environment conducive to reaching a consensus among all stakeholders in UNIOSIL.

On the basis of what I have just said, my Government is reasonably hopeful that UNIOSIL

should be able to take the achievements of UNAMSIL further in consolidating gains, as well as to play a key role in the transition to the development process in Sierra Leone. In that context, we consider two things as relevant and essential.

First, stability in neighbouring countries is essential. It is clear that development in peace and stability in Sierra Leone will be difficult to achieve in isolation, without peace in neighbouring countries. It is therefore essential that we tackle the task of peacebuilding in a broader perspective that takes into account the regional dimension. We would therefore like to see the various United Nations missions and offices deployed in the subregion of West Africa continue to closely cooperate and collaborate with one another towards that goal.

Secondly, from the mid- and long-term perspectives, the importance of local ownership cannot be overemphasized in the next phase into which Sierra Leone is moving under UNIOSIL. As I have already noted, one of the reasons for the success of UNAMSIL was its respect for, and encouragement of, Sierra Leonean ownership of the process during its transition, with the support of the international community. That practice should continue to prevail, and should be reinforced as the country moves to the next phase, in which development will begin to take on greater importance.

In conclusion, there are enormous needs and high expectations among the population, not only in Freetown but in rural areas as well, for improvement in such areas as education and health care. In addition, the issues of unemployment among young people — who should be key to the future development of the country — corruption and the vulnerability of the judicial system are potential threats to the security and political stability of Sierra Leone. They must be addressed urgently under the ownership of the Sierra Leone Government.

At the November meeting of the Consultative Group, Japan affirmed its commitment to continue to be actively involved in the consolidation of peace in Sierra Leone in collaboration with the Government of Sierra Leone and working closely with UNIOSIL and other international actors.

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to join other speakers in expressing my gratitude to Mr. Daudi Mwakawago, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sierra Leone, for the comprehensive briefing he has just given us on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and on the preparations to establish the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL). As that was his last briefing on UNAMSIL, allow me to also commend the work of the members of the Mission. In many respects — including with regard to cooperation between United Nations missions in the subregion — this has been a very innovative peacekeeping mission.

The report, which we have had an opportunity to review, and the briefing given to the Council are sources of encouragement, and they make us optimistic about the future of Sierra Leone. UNAMSIL's effective completion of its peacekeeping mission means that, after six years of operations and following the Mission's withdrawal at the end of this month, Sierra Leone is now on the path to post-conflict recovery. Stable security conditions were established; progress was made in rebuilding the security sector; State authority was restored; and progress was made in reasserting State control over the diamond industry. There were also improvements in the area of human rights. There was sustained economic recovery, and the country established peaceful relations with its neighbours.

The Mission's progressive and calibrated exit strategy, which was guided by specific benchmarks, has proved to be effective and successful. A phase in the United Nations effort has thus come to a close, namely, that of peacekeeping and emergency assistance. The peacebuilding chapter has now begun. The United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone will have a prominent role in supporting the Government, especially in areas such as economic governance and building up sustainable national capacity to resolve conflicts.

In that context, Argentina believes that a coordinated, uniform and integrated approach to peacebuilding and reconciliation is required in order to address the specific needs of countries emerging from conflict situations. The goal should be to achieve recovery, reintegration and reconstruction on the way to laying the foundations for sustainable development. The new body that we have decided to set up — the Peacebuilding Commission — will have a key role to play in that regard. We hope that it will assist UNIOSIL in its tasks.

Sierra Leone is at a crossroads. The tasks that the country will have to accomplish in order to carry out its programme of post-conflict peacebuilding will be as difficult as the ones it had to complete during the previous peacekeeping phase. It will be necessary to address serious socio-economic problems — especially facing up to the problem of widespread corruption, providing education and health services to the population and putting in place policies that ensure sustained economic growth. It will also be necessary to carefully follow up the preparations for the elections to be held in 2007. We urge the international community to renew its commitment to building on the achievements made since UNAMSIL's deployment, in order that, together with the Government of Sierra Leone, those achievements can be translated into concrete benefits for the people of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Ambassador Daudi Mwakawago, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sierra Leone, for the briefing he has just given us in introduction of the Secretary-General's twenty-seventh, and last, report on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) (S/2005/777). I should like Ambassador Mwakawago and all his predecessors to know how much my delegation appreciates their enlightened guidance of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

The withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone marks the end of the peacekeeping operation in that country. We have come a long way: from the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL), which was established in July 1998, to the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), set up in October 1999, and now to the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL), which is soon to become operational. Sierra Leone is without a doubt a peacekeeping success story. It is also an exemplar of cooperation between the United Nations and regional African organizations, which have demonstrated how useful they are.

In that connection, the Secretary-General has highlighted some of the innovations that have characterized the Mission's disengagement process and the management of the subsequent phases. Those have included the development of precise criteria to guide the exit strategy, the establishment of UNIOSIL and the regional approach taken in peacekeeping operations. We particularly welcome that regional approach, which reflects an ongoing effort to control external factors affecting the situation in a given country.

From the perspective of the mandate given to the Mission, we can take pleasure in saying that UNAMSIL has done its job. However, in reading the Secretary-General's last two reports, we are struck by his assessment of the political situation prevailing in the country. The newly restored security and stability stand in contrast to the clear threats confronting the country's future. Those threats emanate from the underlying causes of the conflict that roiled the country for over 10 years. The persistence of those threats certainly cannot be blamed on UNAMSIL, but they must be highlighted as representing a limit to what the international community can do in terms of peace and security. The situation should prompt us to rethink the mandates of peacekeeping operations and to reassess the exit strategies established for their draw-down. We need to learn every possible lesson from this experience.

We believe that peacekeeping operations should be endowed with a clear mandate to address and eradicate the roots of conflicts in countries where they are deployed in order to establish solid bases for subsequent peaceful development. We are convinced that the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission will make it possible to address, with equal attention, the underlying causes of conflicts and the violence and chaos they entail. The Peacebuilding Commission should follow very closely the work of the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone. We hope that it will spare no effort in helping Sierra Leone to remain on the path of peace.

From that perspective, we support the recommendations of the Secretary-General concerning various areas of activity in which an ongoing effort must be made to consolidate achievements. We call on the political class of Sierra Leone fully to shoulder its responsibility to overcome the difficulties surrounding the upcoming elections, which will be a real challenge to the maintenance of peace and security throughout the country. We urge the international community to strengthen its support for Sierra Leone, particularly by increasing the resources available to the country, given the reduction in post-conflict humanitarian assistance and the high rate of poverty throughout the country. Efforts should be made to reduce that poverty by enhancing the Government's capacity to provide the

people with the basic social services necessary to an improved quality of life.

In that regard, the consolidation of the achievements made requires increased attention to the implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and to improving the human rights situation.

In conclusion, we pay tribute to the staff of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone for their invaluable contribution to the country's recovery. As the Mission draws down, my delegation, through me, pays tribute to the troop-contributing countries for their precious contribution to peacekeeping in Sierra Leone and the stability of West Africa.

I take this opportunity to honour the memory of the peacekeepers who made the ultimate sacrifice in their commitment to peace in Sierra Leone. All of West Africa will cherish their memory from generation to generation.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): I, too, wish to thank Mr. Mwakawago for his briefing and for his efforts at the head of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL).

We recall that five years of war in Sierra Leone cost the lives of some 50,000 people and led to the enlistment of 10,000 child soldiers. Today, six year's after UNAMSIL's deployment, that country has regained stability and peace. The involvement of the United Nations and the international community has been a success and set an example. I believe that needs to be highlighted because we need such success stories. Just as we recognize our success in Burundi, we should recognize this success in Sierra Leone.

As the last UNAMSIL contingents prepare to leave Sierra Leone, I feel that we should try to assess the success of international and United Nations actions in resolving the crisis. That is what I should briefly like to do now in considering the factors for success, the exit strategy and our efforts to combat impunity.

What were the main factors for the success of the Mission and of the international community's involvement in resolving the crisis in Sierra Leone? I believe that those factors are linked above all to the characteristics of the Mission itself. It has a robust mandate and adequate staffing, with some 17,500 troops by the year 2001, covering one third of the territory of Liberia and a quarter of the territory of Côte d'Ivoire. I pay tribute to all the troop-contributing countries for the quality of their contingents. I note in particular that the deployment of a Pakistani mechanized brigade was also key in confronting the Revolutionary United Front.

To the President of the Security Council, I affirm quite openly my belief that the second key factor to success was the United Kingdom's involvement on two fronts — with UNAMSIL in restoring peace and stability, by force when necessary, and with the Sierra Leonean authorities in re-establishing the country's security and police forces.

I now turn to UNAMSIL's exit strategy, which I believe should also be hailed as an example. As others have done, I should like to stress that the definition and implementation of an exit strategy have been and remain essential at a time when the number of Blue Helmets deployed has reached record levels. I believe that the formula for progressive withdrawal, with very clear-cut criteria, that was adopted by the Security Council with respect to UNAMSIL is undoubtedly a model on which we should draw when we consider the withdrawal of other peacekeeping operations.

The third element to which I wish to refer involves our efforts to combat impunity. The establishment of the Special Court in Freetown and the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission have played an essential role in promoting and ensuring the restoration of peace and stability. The fight against impunity is indeed integral to crisis settlement strategies. That is true in Sierra Leone and elsewhere, such as the Sudan and Côte d'Ivoire, to cite just two examples.

I take this opportunity to reaffirm France's support for the Court, to which my country recently made a financial contribution. I also welcome the role being played by Nigeria and soon to be played by Mongolia in ensuring the Court's security and safety.

Like others, I assert that the international community must continue to support Sierra Leone in its efforts to consolidate peace and ensure development. Indeed, the United Nations will pursue its work in that area with the establishment in the next few days of the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone. Nor must we ignore the regional dimension of the problem or the role played by the United Nations Mission in Liberia and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire.

In conclusion, I thank the United Kingdom for the draft presidential statement before us, which we wholeheartedly support.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my national capacity. I have the honour to speak also on behalf of the European Union and those countries which have aligned themselves with this statement.

As the last peacekeeping troops leave Sierra Leone, the European Union commends the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) for its central contribution to the peace and stability of Sierra Leone. The efforts of the Special Representatives, other United Nations officials and the troop-contributing countries, together with the cooperation of the people of Sierra Leone, have ensured the success of the Mission.

UNAMSIL has demonstrated a sure touch in its efforts to secure, develop and enhance security. We welcome the drawdown of the Mission, as it demonstrates to the people of Sierra Leone that the conflict lies behind them.

The legacy of the past six years is a peace that can and must continue to be built upon. The Mission has shown innovative ways of cooperating with local actors and with the international community. The use of defined benchmarks for managing the drawdown has proved successful. And the willingness to work with other United Nations regional operations, such as the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, as well as the United Nations Office for West Africa, has been highly beneficial.

The European Union is committed to working with the Government of Sierra Leone to demonstrate to the people that the benefits of peace are tangible and to working with them to improve their lives. The European Union is dedicated to ensuring that economic and social development is enhanced and continues to invest in infrastructure and institutional programmes in order to achieve that. Improved access to rural areas and the rehabilitation of the education and health infrastructure in those areas are key ways to demonstrate to all Sierra Leoneans that the country is improving. Those aspects will therefore be the focus of the European Union development assistance.

We look forward to the support of UNMIL in providing security for the Special Court for Sierra Leone. The regional aspect of the conflict was important, and cooperation from the Mano River Union and the Economic Community of West African States will be key in building peaceful development.

The European Union notes the success of the recent Consultative Group donors meeting in London, was pleased to participate and hopes that it will enable the successful implementation of the Government of Sierra Leone's poverty reduction strategy plan.

The European Union expects that the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone will continue to support the work of the Government as it faces up to its many challenges. Reform of institutions, improvements in infrastructure and the challenge of tackling corruption will need continued support. The focus on human rights is to be commended, as, in particular, the problems faced by young people and women are also addressed.

The European Union looks forward to credible elections in 2007 and to a tolerant and responsible attitude to campaigning from all parties and their supporters. The work of the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone in support of the electoral process will be important. We hope that the withdrawal of UNAMSIL marks the end of the conflict phase in Sierra Leone, and we look forward to cooperating in the building of a prosperous and durable peace, particularly on the day when the Peacebuilding Commission has been agreed by the Security Council and the General Assembly.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Pemagbi (Sierra Leone): This meeting marks an important milestone in the history of United Nations peacekeeping. I am therefore grateful to the Council for the honour of participating in its proceedings on behalf of the Government of Sierra Leone.

The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) has every reason to be proud of what it has accomplished in Sierra Leone during the past six years. The Mission has turned out to be one of the most successful peacekeeping operations undertaken by the United Nations in an internal conflict in the last three decades. At the same time, notwithstanding the difficult challenges it faced — what the Secretary-

General described as trials and tribulations — in the early days of the operation, UNAMSIL bears testimony to the triangular partnership that must be at the centre of all United Nations peacekeeping: regional organizations, troop-contributing countries and the United Nations. As the Secretary-General observed in his final report (S/2005/777), UNAMSIL was the first United Nations peacekeeping operation to "re-hat" a parallel sub-regional peacekeeping force.

In that context, allow me to pay special tribute to our subregional organization, the Economic Community of West African States, and its Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), for the vital and timely contribution they made to the safety and the security of the people of Sierra Leone before the deployment of UNAMSIL. ECOMOG troops exchanged their hats for blue berets to serve under the flag of the United Nations. Another symbol of partnership and cooperation in United Nations peacekeeping was the parallel contribution of the United Kingdom to the maintenance of stability in the country. We thank them for the role that they have played and continue to play.

As the report of the Secretary-General notes, UNAMSIL forged an effective partnership with the United Nations country team, countries of the subregion, the donor community, civil society, the Government and, of course, the people of Sierra Leone. Without such partnership, UNAMSIL would not have accomplished its task.

In that connection, I should add that UNAMSIL succeeded because the people of Sierra Leone made it possible for it to succeed. Indeed, as the report of the Secretary-General puts it, the Government and the people of Sierra Leone also deserve commendation for their remarkable resilience and for making good use of the opportunity offered by international partners to lift their country from crisis. I am convinced that we have demonstrated that, with some assistance, Sierra Leone is capable of fulfilling its responsibilities.

The departure of UNAMSIL is a clear indication that the Government of Sierra Leone has resumed full responsibility for the security of the country. I would like to assure the Council that the people of Sierra Leone are determined to muster the same resilience that carried us through those dark days of the rebel conflict to prevent the outbreak of another so-called fratricidal war. We wish to assure the international community that Sierra Leoneans have pledged that never again will Sierra Leoneans give the United Nations, the Economic Community of West African States or any individual State, for that matter, cause to bring troops into our country to end a civil conflict.

Of course, we remain concerned about the situation in the West African subregion. However, we hope that the Security Council and the international community will remain engaged in the efforts towards the maintenance of security and stability in the subregion. We must not forget the destabilizing role that external forces played in fomenting and sustaining the conflict in Sierra Leone. Let me take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to all the countries that contributed military, police and civilian personnel and other forms of support to the United Nations operations in Sierra Leone. We promise that their efforts and sacrifice will not have been in vain.

I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and his team for the good work that they have done. I would like to extend that appreciation to the mandate to his predecessor, Ambassador Oluyemi Adeniji.

We look forward to the operationalization of the new the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone. Of course, we anxiously look forward to the work of the new Peacebuilding Commission.

Lastly, I would like to all thank all those who have asked the international community to continue to support Sierra Leone. Clearly, continued support is far less expensive in the long run than a relapse into conflict.

The President: I now ask the Special Representative of the Secretary-General whether he would like to take the floor again to offer any comments in response to the statements that the Council has heard. I give him the floor.

Mr. Mwakawago: Since there were no questions or queries that require a response on my part, I should like publicly to thank you, Mr. President, and all the members of the Council for having commended the good work done by the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). UNAMSIL's success is the Council's success. Without the Council's support, we would not have succeeded.

Finally, today is a historic day that saw the adoption of the resolution on the Peacebuilding Commission. The people of Sierra Leone are hopeful

that they will be worthy candidates in that respect, so that peace can be sustained in that very beautiful country. Those who have visited Sierra Leone know that it is a fantastic country.

The President: After consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

> "The Security Council commends the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) for its invaluable contribution over the last six years to Sierra Leone's recovery from conflict and its progress towards peace, democracy and prosperity. The Council is grateful to the Secretary-General, his Special Representatives, and all the individuals from the United Nations and from troop- and police-contributing countries who have made UNAMSIL a success, especially those who helped UNAMSIL recover from the crisis it faced in May 2000. The Council also deeply appreciates the cooperation extended by the Government and the people of Sierra Leone to UNAMSIL and to the members of the United Nations family operating in the country.
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> "The Security Council notes with satisfaction the innovations in UNAMSIL's methods of operation that may prove useful best practice in making other United Nations peacekeeping operations more effective and efficient, including an exit strategy based on specific benchmarks for drawdown; an integrated mission with a Deputy Special Representative managing governance, developmental and humanitarian elements; and substantial, regular cooperation and coordination with other United Nations peacekeeping operations and offices in the region.
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> "At the request of the Security Council, the Secretary-General has established the new United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone in order to provide continued support to the Government as it tackles the many challenges ahead, including good governance, sustainable economic development, job creation and delivery of public services. The Government will need the sustained help of donors and development partners, particularly in addressing difficult but essential issues like security sector reform, fighting corruption, the reinforcement of governance mechanisms including the judiciary, and equal rights for women and girls. The Council therefore encourages Sierra Leone's development partners to continue their support in all these areas, and notes with satisfaction the outcome of the recent Donors' Consultative Group meeting on Sierra Leone in London.
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> "With Sierra Leone now stable and at peace, the Security Council sees a great opportunity for the development of a mature and vibrant political culture. Achieving this will require tolerance, cooperation from all sides and a shared commitment to act responsibly and avoid inflammatory rhetoric. To that end, Government and political leaders should reaffirm their commitment to the basic principles of democratic governance. This will pave the way for fair, transparent and peaceful elections in 2007.
>
> "The Security Council reiterates its appreciation for the work of the Special Court for Sierra Leone and its vital contribution to reconciliation and the rule of law in the country and the subregion, and encourages all States, particularly States in the subregion, to cooperate fully with the Court and to provide it with the necessary financial resources.
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> "The Security Council continues to emphasize the importance of a regional approach to the countries of West Africa. The Council hopes that Sierra Leone's neighbours will intensify their cooperation, not least through the Mano River Union and the Economic Community of West African States, especially in the area of peace and security, and with the continued support of the United Nations and development partners."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2005/63.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.